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Tuesday - February 12, 2002

PLANT CITY OFFICER CHARGED IN FOUR COUNT INDICTMENT

United States Attorney Mac Cauley announced today a federal grand jury has returned a four count indictment charging Plant City Police Officer ARMAND T. COTNOIR.

Count One- Conspiracy to deprive citizens of their civil rights.

Count Two- Deprivation of civil rights under color of law.

Count Three- Obstruction of Justice

Count Four- Misprision of felony

On December 12, 2001, COTNOIR, age 27, turned himself in to U.S. Marshals after being advised a complaint had been filed in U.S. District Court.

The indictment alleges that COTNOIR and other members of the Plant City Police Department's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) were engaging in the warrantless, unlawful entry into residences and hotel rooms of various Plant City citizens. The indictment further alleges that personal property was stolen during the warrantless entry and that false police reports and false sworn affidavits were submitted.

If convicted COTNOIR faces a maximum of 10 years in federal prison. An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

This case is being investigated by Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey J. Del Fuoco.